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TWO YEARS' PROGRESS
IN
THE UNITED CHURCH
OF CANADA

1928

BUREAU OF LITERATURE AND INFORMATION

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

R. J. WILSON, D.D., Secretary 299 QUEEN STREET WEST, TORONTO 2

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"Our greatest mission is to rescue admitted truths from the neglect caused by their admission."

—Coleridge.

WITHDRAWN

INTRODUCTION

THERE is an almost universal demand in Christendom for a union of churches which will, in some way, at once give solidarity and visibility to the unity of all Christians. In India, in Scotland, in England, in Australia, there are new movements toward unity. Conferences on World Faith and Order are meeting continually. Within the Churches of the Reformed Faith, there is a disposition to accentuate the things that unite. The feeling is general, that the body of Christ, which is His Church, has been sufficiently rent and riven, that however respectable and necessary the historical origins of the divisions of Christendom may have been, the gamut of "special testimonies to neglected or ignored aspects of Christian truth" has been pretty well run through, and that the time has come for fusing the insight and the experience, the knowledge and the understanding that the separated Churches have gained into one comprehensive Christian witness. The conference in Lausanne on Faith and Order was symptomatic of a need and a condition which is pressing on the whole Christian world. It revealed the scandal of division, and the bankruptcy of denominationalism to meet the world's need. The exclusiveness of separated churches received a severe rebuke; pride

and prestige could not remain when the churches clothed themselves with humility.

The Lambeth appeal has at once engendered and dashed the hopes of many communions. The Malines Conversations have shown the remoteness of any united church on the basis of dead loyalties. The Pope's encyclical has closed the door even to negotiations. Meanwhile the whole question of union is up for review and presses for an answer. Difficulties will have to be encountered, but if met in a definitely Christian spirit it is unlikely that there will be found any spiritual reason why Churches cannot and may not unite.

CHURCH UNION IN CANADA

IN CANADA an extraordinary and fruitful union of Churches has actually been achieved. The Congregational Churches of Canada, The Methodist Church (Canada), and The Presbyterian Church in Canada have united and now constitute The United Church of Canada. This is Canada's tentative answer to the cry for Union.

One must remember that, in Canada, the ideal of union has been working as a leaven for a hundred years, and that here it was possible, as nowhere else, to build a union on the *work* the Church is called to do rather than on theological compromises and philosophical deductions—on a common *task* and a common *spirit* rather than on a common *tradition.*

The denominational emphasis of the Churches in the United States and Canada present a striking contrast. In both of these great countries, the pioneer missionary taught the people "to plant their altars where they ploughed their acres" but in the United States a more insistent emphasis was laid upon denominational loyalty and prestige. The whole history of the political and religious life of Canada is a story of knitting separate units into one, to form a complete whole. National unity and Church Union have travelled side by side throughout sixty years. Politically, national unity found expression in Confederation. Eight years after Confederation, The Presbyterian Church in Canada realized the dream of a united Presbyterian Church, and nine years later still, the Methodist Churches in Canada realized a similar national

union. Such Unions were bound to have a definite effect upon the national life, in bringing about mutual understanding of the common interests of the country as a whole.

FORMER UNIONS

THE FRONTIER settlers, who blazed the trails through the forests of Canada a hundred years ago, were anxious for a religion for their children which would express their common aspiration for a Christian country. Hence, in the Canadian atmosphere of a century ago, old-world traditional divergencies were greatly modified; antipathies evaporated in the presence of neighborliness and a common religious task. So Unions, impossible in the Homeland, were necessary and more easily possible in the new. Behind the realization of a United Church of Canada in 1925, there lay nearly a score of unions, extending over a century and more, of separated branches of the parent Churches. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was itself the product of nine unions and seven absorptions of formerly independent bodies; The Methodist Church (Canada) gathered into itself sixteen separate bodies in eight successive unions. The two streams of Congregationalism from England and from New England had a score of years before Union united their separate unions into the Congregational Union of Canada. There was, therefore, in Canada, only one Methodist General Conference, one Presbyterian General Assembly and one Congregational Council of Canada when the matter of Organic Union came into the horizon of the Churches.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

THE UNITED Church of Canada has been in existence for two years and a half—the tremendous spiritual and emotional currents, released at the inauguration services, have found their proper channels, and one may now study with calmness this great adventure of faith, or better, this new discovery of fellowship and power in the unity of the spirit. The United Church is not merely an amalgamation, it is a real union of spirit. At no meeting of church court, board or united congregation has there ever been a division of the house along strictly denominational lines. Former Presbyterian ministers have been called to Methodist churches and Methodist and Congregational ministers now occupy former Presbyterian pulpits with even greater ease, grace and freedom from anxiety than in their former denominations. Ancient loyalties deep-rooted as ever, have lost their compelling power in a deeper loyalty, which aims to give visibility and undivided witness to Christ's Body which is His Church. Indigenous to the soil, The United Church of Canada will bring to fruition the aims and ideals of those pioneers, in three widely separated communions, who learned the secret of co-operation for the sake of Canada.

THE PRESENT ACHIEVEMENT

Into this United Church entered all the congregations of The Methodist Church, practically all the Congregational Churches and eighty-three per cent. of the congregations, comprising seventy per cent.

of the membership of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, all the missionary staffs of the three uniting Churches, numbering 655, with the exception of seventeen Presbyterian Foreign Missionaries (including men, wives and single women), all the Professors of the eight Theological Colleges, except two, and all the Secretaries, Editors and Officials, with two Presbyterian exceptions. The achievement of The United Church of Canada is of first magnitude. Time is a great healer and the history of former unions in Canada, where there has always been an intransigent minority, leads one to hope that in future unions of Churches in Canada, which are bound to come, separated brethren will be reunited under Canadian skies.

NOTABLE CONSOLIDATION

Within one year of the consummation of Union, The United Church of Canada had consolidated twenty-six boards and committees of the three uniting Churches into six boards; three denominational papers into one effective weekly paper, *The New Outlook;* three missionary papers into the *United Church Record and Missionary Review;* three Women's Missionary papers into one, *The Missionary Monthly;* and had merged fifteen Theological Colleges into eight. All the publishing interests of three Churches had been united under one Board of Publications, issuing twenty-eight publications for Sunday School and Young People's Societies, including papers and lesson helps. Twelve separate Treasurer's Departments had been unified into one Treasury Department, and one financial

appeal a year had been issued for the Maintenance and Extension of the Missionary and Educational enterprises of the whole Church at home and abroad.

AMALGAMATIONS OF CONGREGATIONS

Since June, 1925, amalgamations have reached the startling figure of 410 churches which have been consolidated into just half that number, to form strong and, for the most part, self-sustaining community churches. These are widely distributed. In British Columbia there are more than 45; in Alberta, 23; in Saskatchewan, 38; in Manitoba, 22; in London Conference, 36; in Hamilton Conference, 30; in Toronto Conference, 60; in Bay of Quinte Conference, 24; in Montreal and Ottawa Conference, 45; in the Maritimes, 87.

The gain has been enormous. For one thing, the overhead expenses have been usually cut in two; the minister has had a man's job; the musical service of the church has been greatly strengthened by a consolidation of the choirs, and in hundreds of cases the Home Mission Board has been entirely relieved of the necessity of paying two grants in a single community, where none is now needed.

A TYPICAL CASE

In a village in Western Ontario there were two churches built across the road from one another. Two ministers carried on the work. In either church there was plenty of room to accommodate the entire community. Both churches received a grant from the Home Mission funds. The two grants for the last dozen years have totalled from

$700 to $1,000 a year. The two congregations decided to unite—and did so unanimously. The newly-formed united church serves the whole community, supports the minister, meets all running expenses, requires no aid from the mission funds of the Church and is now in a position to contribute almost one thousand dollars a year to the missionary funds of the Church. This process is bound to go on. There is a growing conscience in all the churches, that it is not Christian to perpetuate division to the detriment of the work of the Kingdom of God.

Reports reveal an even more interesting and important fact. Many Presbyteries have, by regrouping congregations, made the charges more compact and workable. For example, a Presbytery has rearranged its charges, creating thirteen out of the former sixteen, has closed eight churches and in the thirteen new charges carries on more effective work than formerly. Another Presbytery has rearranged its charges so that they are now served from the main highways, and most of the difficulties incident to winter travel are being eliminated. Incidentally, the saving in this Presbytery of Home Mission funds will amount to $2,500 a year, and the Presbytery believes the work will be better done. A Home Mission Presbytery in Saskatchewan reports, "This Presbytery is being reorganized to great advantage, and the future will find that we are establishing real church centres." In Rabbit Lake (Battleford Presbytery) "A railroad has just entered, and a lively town has come into being, the Presbytery has been able, under Union,

to reorganize old territory and place a church centre where it ought to be." Another Presbytery in Manitoba reports: "Every district in this Presbytery will be supplied with a Sunday School and preaching service this year." Similar statements might be made of a full half-hundred Presbyteries.

MINISTERIAL SUPPLY

When Union was consummated there were 270 former Presbyterian ministers without charges. Because of local unions more than two hundred additional ministers required new fields. Yet the need has been sufficiently great to absorb practically all the available effective ministers of the Church.

A NOBLE EXAMPLE

A fine example of noble service may be cited in Northern Ontario. In that large Home Mission area can be found some of the brightest and keenest young minds in the Church. No less than seventeen young men are laboring here, who have taken first rank scholarship in Arts and Theology, and who have pursued post-graduate work in the United States or Europe. They are happy in their service on the frontier, and their fine leadership is laying broad and permanent foundations for the Church's future work. As Christian statesmen their work is of the highest order. In The United Church of Canada there is no anxiety felt among ministers, that if the early years of their service are offered for the frontier, they are thereby handicapped for the larger pulpits, after they have reached the height of their ministerial powers. The very reverse is true.

AN EDUCATED MINISTRY

Perhaps one reason for this lies in the fact that the ministry of The United Church, almost one-half of which serves in Home Mission areas, is an educated ministry.

Among the ministers of The United Church in the homeland there are held more than three thousand degrees, granted by recognized Universities and Theological Colleges within the British Empire.

Again, the Foreign field has always commanded the life and devotion of many of the ablest students of the colleges. One could name scores of front-rank scholarship men, who are manning strategic points in the non-Christian world, any or all of whom might easily have become preachers and teachers of international reputation, if they had remained in the homeland. Two hundred and seventy-eight degrees have been granted to Foreign Missionaries of The United Church, besides other degrees and numerous decorations for conspicuous public service. While some of the most devoted ministers in The United Church have no degrees, and while degrees in themselves may mean very little and those possessing them usually think least about them, yet they are an indication that the ministry of The United Church is an educated ministry. Substantial guarantees are forthcoming, that the present high standard of scholarship will be not only maintained but considerably raised in future years.

THE CHURCH'S TASK

THE FOREIGN Mission Board reports that The United Church of Canada has established relations of fellowship and service with representatives of all the major races and more important land divisions of the non-Christian world. The work formerly carried on by each of the uniting Churches supplements the rest. There is no overlapping and no unseemly rivalry among the uniting Churches in the Foreign field. As a whole, the Foreign Mission task of The United Church of Canada constitutes a worthy heritage and offers an attractive opportunity for effective service in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the present time 603 missionaries are on the staff (including wives and single persons engaged in the work), and of these 185 are supported by the Woman's Missionary Society. The annual budget of the Woman's Missionary Society represents an outlay of $1,250,000. There are 5,678 Woman's Missionary Societies (including junior and affiliated societies and mission bands) in The United Church, and they have a total membership of 194,691.

HOME MISSION WORK

The task of supplying Gospel ordinances to the people of Canada has taxed the resources and ingenuity of all the Churches. Happily for this country, the larger part of the population are living in the rural sections. In Western Canada, especially, the settlements are often sparse and isolated. The avowed ambition of the United

Church is to claim every community in Canada for Christ, and to minister in His name to all, regardless of creed, language or color, who need her help, and who are dependent upon her for comfort and instruction in the Gospel.

The United Church has 4,105 preaching places in the Home Mission areas of Canada alone—almost forty-eight per cent. of the worshipping units of the whole Church; 1,373 United Church ministers are engaged in this work.

In Western Canada 2,339 places are ministered to by home missionaries; in the Maritime Provinces, 589, and in Quebec and Ontario, chiefly in the mining and lumbering areas of Northern Ontario, there are 882 points regularly supplied.

Few, if any, Protestants who come to Canada will be beyond the reach of ordinances, and the vast majority of them will find that The United Church is the only Church doing Christian work in the areas where they settle. In this nation-wide responsibility The United Church is unique.

The general prosperity of the country, and the increase of population in Home Mission areas has resulted in a considerable saving of church funds; 278 charges, where an annual grant had formerly been required, have within the past year reached the status of self-support, and are no longer a charge on Home Mission funds. It has, thereby, been possible for The United Church to open 149 mission fields in new territory, in which no Protestant service had been held previously. Each of these fields has an average of almost four preaching points. At a glance one sees that The United

Church has assumed responsibility for the new settlers in between five and six hundred communities hitherto neglected by all the Churches.

THE FOREIGN-SPEAKING PROBLEM

The problem of religious leadership for the New Canadians presses heavily on all Canadian Churches and The United Church has taken vigorous hold of it. Two hundred and sixty-eight missionaries and helpers among people of languages, other than English are at work. Work is carried on in 85 Missions, 34 Social Centres, 26 Hospitals and 26 Schools and School Homes.

A glimpse at the programme for a week's activities in an All Peoples' Mission gives one the impression of well-directed energy and abounding zeal. Within one week a single institution maintains contact with 1,600 non-Anglo-Saxons, through not less than 52 regular, besides several special, meetings. Results are not wanting. For example, one institution has trained twenty-five Sunday-school teachers, all non-Anglo-Saxon. Eight young Ukrainians, who have grown up under the influence of such a church, have definitely pledged themselves to missionary endeavor among their own people as doctors, teachers or ministers. One of the outstanding boy leaders in Canada is an old boy of such an institution, and instances could be multiplied in a dozen ways to show that in all these enterprises the religious appeal is paramount. There is no distinction of race or creed, all belong to God's great family. Jesus Christ is the central figure in study, in work, in play and in worship.

BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT

Answers to a questionnaire sent out to lay representatives indicate that, since the consummation of Union, there has been great activity among the local congregations in repairing and remodelling buildings, and in securing and furnishing manses or parsonages for the ministry of the Church. Reports have been received from about two-thirds of the Church, so that figures quoted are far below the actual payments for the whole Church. Some general observations in this connection should be made. New churches have been built almost wholly, either in non-competitive centres, or to take the place of temporary structures where mission work was formerly carried on. The building activity has been greatest, indeed, has been largely confined in the new and Home Mission areas of the Church, and in the large cities. For example, in Northern Ontario, seventeen new churches have been erected, two new church halls and five manses completed, and five other new churches are being promoted. In Manitoba, ten new churches, while in Saskatchewan twenty-eight new churches are already completed and double that number in contemplation. In Alberta, twenty new churches and Sunday schools, and in British Columbia, nineteen new churches and Sunday Schools have been erected.

Extraordinary activity has been displayed in the rapidly-growing cities of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver:

IN MONTREAL, since 10th June, 1925, fifteen new churches and church halls have been erected,

at a cost of more than one million dollars, and twelve other new churches are planned for the immediate future. This largest city in Canada is growing at the rate of 125,000 per year and though the Protestants represent only twenty per cent. of the inhabitants, yet the rapid influx of population is making, and will continue to make, heavy demands on benevolent and philanthropic effort for years to come. Montreal is fortunate in having most competent and generous lay leadership in the Finance and Extension Board of the Montreal Presbytery.

IN GREATER TORONTO, since the consummation of Union, new churches or extensions to former buildings have been undertaken in forty-three centres, including twenty-three new churches, one Church of All Nations, one Church for the Deaf, one extension to Italian Mission, extensive repairs and alterations to eleven churches, and three new, large, Sunday Schools, with modern equipment for more effective Young People's work. Sites have also been secured in new and growing parts of the suburbs, and four causes have recently been established. New buildings have also been erected at camp sites used in connection with Summer Mission work.

More than two and a half millions have been spent on buildings in this Presbytery alone.

IN VANCOUVER, fifteen new churches have either been completed or are in course of erection, and half as many more are already projected.

A fair proportion of building activity was in any

case bound to go on, and considerable building would have taken place, quite regardless of Union. But it is important to note that, under Union, church sites have been chosen with a view to serving the whole community and a great deal of the building programme of the past two years would have been indefinitely delayed if Union had not taken place. The total building of churches and Sunday Schools, since Union, throughout the whole Church, represents an outlay in excess of $4,750,000.

Mortgages

Mortgages amounting to more than $950,000 have been paid off churches, Sunday Schools and manses or parsonages.

Repairs

The item for repairing, decorating and refurnishing churches and Sunday Schools represents $849,045.

Parsonages

Manses or Parsonages have been bought or built in many places, amounting to a total of more than $305,034. Ministers' residences have been repaired and refurnished at an expenditure of more than $284,281.

Organs

New organs have been installed, old ones enlarged and rebuilt, and pianos bought for church purposes amounting to a total of $357,558. The above items represent the returns from about two-thirds of the whole Church. The actual totals would be very much larger.

The amount involved in these special items of outlay by the congregations of The United Church of Canada, since the date of Union, represents a total of almost $8,000,000.

Again it must be pointed out that while many of the improvements undertaken are in no sense directly chargeable to a Union of the Churches, yet the amount involved is so much larger than is represented by normal denominational upkeep, that one may fairly claim that in many cases it was the result of Union, and, in some others, Union was the occasion of renewed activity and more generous provision for worshipping congregations. The Churches have been made cleaner and worthier places and will, thereby, the better minister to the spirit of worship.

Church building is not a luxury in The United Church. It is a necessity if she is to overtake her widening horizons of service in Common Worship. The churches erected are not in already over-churched parts of the cities or country. Not a few of them are Churches of All Nations—a fruitful and unique contribution to the religious life of New Canadians of foreign extraction. In the newer parts of the country, extensive building will be necessary for some years to come.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Ministers

THERE are 3,695 ordained ministers and missionaries in The United Church of Canada. Of these 2,682 are employed in the active pastorate; 593 are retired or superannuated.

Almost one-half of the active ministry is employed in Home Mission areas. The United Church of Canada also employed last year 346 student missionaries in new and pioneer fields.

CONGREGATIONS

Charges

There are 3,198 charges in The United Church of Canada, duly organized, and in them a total of about 7,500 preaching places. In addition, there are hundreds of places in unorganized territory.

Besides preaching the gospel in 20 different languages, The United Church of Canada has equipped, manned and maintained 26 hospitals in pioneer, foreign and backward communities.

Amalgamations

Four hundred and ten congregations have been amalgamated into just half that number; overlapping has thereby been eliminated; strong self-supporting causes have been established; assistance from the Home Mission Funds of the Church rendered unnecessary, and vacant property turned to use in Young People's, Sunday School and Community Service.

Membership

Membership of the Church as a whole shows a net increase of 19,820 for the year. (The statistics are incomplete as there are no returns from 319 charges.) There is, however, an increase in every Conference of the Church. The reported membership stands at 629,549.

Sunday Schools

More than 6,300 Sunday Schools (including 300 new schools organized during the present year), 68,000 teachers, 659,000 scholars—is the Sunday-school enrolment. Fifty-six Vacation Schools were held during the past summer with an enrolment of 9,352 scholars, and at 316 centres there are week-day Religious Instruction classes. Thirty-one thousand children, under fourteen years of age, attend worship in junior congregations.

Students

There are nearly 5,000 students enrolled in the Colleges and Universities of the Church, of whom almost 500 are looking forward to the Christian Ministry. Of these, 450 have been definitely received by Presbyteries—others have made their decision, but have not yet been received, as candidates for the Ministry.

Fifteen hundred students are in attendance in Arts in United Church Universities and about 4,500 in Secondary Schools and Colleges of the Church.

Post-Graduate

Upwards of 20 graduates in Arts and Theology are pursuing post-graduate studies in United States and Europe. A full dozen graduates are in post-graduate work at Canadian Universities and Theological Colleges.

PROPERTY VALUES

Congregations own property (exclusive of the General Property of the Church) amounting to more than seventy-eight million dollars.

The general property of the Church, which includes Colleges, Endowments and property held abroad, amounts to more than twenty million dollars.

Congregations paid in stipends to their ministers during 1927 almost four and a half million dollars.

The grand total paid by congregations for all purposes during the past year was in excess of fifteen million dollars.

Since June 10, 1925, The United Church of Canada has received directly from the people and expended on Missions, Education and Benevolences more than nine million dollars.

THE DOMINANT NOTE

A MERE recital of the above figures is impressive. The very massiveness of the Church's investment is challenging. But her chief assets are not in stone or money. There is evident in many parts of The United Church a distinct deepening of spiritual life. The deep religious note of the Consummation Services in 1925 still reverberates in Presbytery meetings; the hundreds of groups engaged in intensive Bible study, prayer circles in every part of the Church, conferences on Evangelism led effectively by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service, the evangelistic note in the sermons of her ablest preachers, and the manifest spiritual hunger of many of her people have constituted at once an opportunity and a challenge.

The United Church is essentially a fellowship in Christ. Any equipment she has, any physical resources she releases in her work, are but an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality. In entering a larger Union, The United Church dared greatly for the Kingdom of God in Canada and the world. She was born of a spirit of great unselfishness, convinced that, by her very name, the welfare of all must be her responsibility.

The United Church is well aware that there must be in her preaching a ringing note of conviction, a winsomeness that is as irresistible as the Spirit of God, a fellowship that prays, and hopes, and believes, that God has yet more light to reveal to His children and that He will reveal it when they are ready to receive it. She must carry her share

of the world's burden of sorrow and pain and hate upon her soul, she must believe in a Love that never —no, not ever—fails. To this end was she born, and the achievement of this task is her glorious destiny.

> *"God has used, beyond anything we had a right to expect, our divided Christendom. But now that we know the sin and disaster of Sectarianism we cannot hope that He will use it much longer. All time lies before us. Let us keep the purpose of Unity firm in our hearts."*
>
> —Bishop Brent

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